

Documents About History
of
The TRG, Irregular and Ecoso Exchange
1967 to 1998

Compiled 1998.

1. Potted History of Ecoso 1967 to 1979
(originally written by Maurie Crow for Ecoso 21))
2. Irregular/TRG,
Ecoso/Crow Collection
/ (written by Ruth Crow 1998)
3. Maurie Crow and the Town Planning
Research Group
(Written Ruth Crow 1998)
4. Review of Subscribers to Ecoso
(written by Ruth Crow mid 1990s)

Irregular/TRG Ecoso and the Crow Collection.

Irregular was first published in 1967 and those to whom it was first circularised were invited to attend a regular monthly discussion group. The discussion group was called the *Town Planning Research Group*.

The newsletter was published monthly and the discussion group was also held monthly until 1971, and from then until 1979 at quarterly intervals. The discussion group met in Kevin Borland's office until 1973 and after that in the meeting room at Maurie Crow's office in Plumbers Union Building)Office. (see attachment extract from *Ecoso*, December 1979 for reasons for discontinuing the newsletter and discussion group).

After Maurie died in 1988 I revised *Ecoso* but not *TRG*. My intention was to produce about a dozen quarterly issues, offering access to some of our documents through a system of DATE (Documents Available Through *Ecoso*). About half of the subscribers were from those who had previously subscribed. (see comparison below).

In 1990, after the *Crow Collection* was acquired by the Victoria University (then the Footscray Institute of Technology), and with the formation of the Crow Collection Association, *Ecoso* became the newsletter for the Crow Collection Association.

COMPARING IREGULAR/TRG/ECOSO WITH ECOSO/CROW COLLECTION ASSOCIATION.

1. Subscribers. Until 1975 *Irregular/Ecoso* had about 130 subscribers. These were mainly people directly involved in planning, architects, engineers, councillors, with a few trade unionists. Its main direction was to examine state and local government planning. In particular to involve people in more activity at local government level.

After 1975 the subscription list was broadened to include more people involved in organisations promoting ideas about ecological issues and social issues such as child care.

Until 1975 there were no interstate subscribers, but after the Radical Ecology Conference the total number of subscribers increased and included a dozen or so from other States.

Between 1967 and 1979 the main age of subscribers would have been between 30 and 45 with a few older people, eg Maurie Crow, Lloyd Edmonds, Frank Meyer (both Lloyd and Frank had worked closely with Maurie in the Clerks Union and Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations/ ACSPA included organisations such as engineers and draftsmen in its membership a few of whom were *TRG* participants and *Irregular/Ecoso* subscribers). Another older member was Vic Marks who was very active in the Amalganated Engineering Union, Several younger

trade unionists were also involved.

The mailing list from the earlier Ecoso was used to solicit subscribers to the second series, with a reasonable response. But by this time these subscribers were reaching middle age. Some younger people did subscribe mainly those who had worked with Maurie and me on ecological issues, for example on applying the cluster and connect principles proposed in "Seeds for Change" and in preparing documents such as "Economic Strategies for Social Change". New subscribers also came from those who had worked with me on health, housing and other such social issues and also from supporters of new political formations such as the Rainbow Alliance and the Greens. There were also subscribers who wanted to keep in touch with the remnants of the CPA, and a few who had sentimental connections with Maurie and me. The new series attracted a few more interstate subscribers, mainly from academics.

Contents. From 1967 to 1975 the contents were mainly directed at the politics of planning issues, This was the period when Maurie and I were very much involved in preparing alternatives to the State Government plans for freeways, urban renewal and the shape of Melbourne. It was also the period when there was an emergence of the new-type urban action organisations. The TRG/Irregular was a clearing house of ideas. It helped people to grapple with these problems and find links through which to build coalitions. TRG/Ecoso did not directly involve people in action, or advocate action.

The contents of the second series of Ecoso differed from the earlier one from the start. It was not meant to be in tandem with a discussion group.

Originally I wanted to temporarily revive Ecoso to promote ideas on the need for a new type of left formation and at the same time to find some way of getting others to make use of the archival material that Maurie and I had gathered. I intended the contents of Ecoso to be more avowedly political than the earlier series. However this was slightly tempered when the publication became the newsletter for the Crow Collection Association. This coincided with the cessation of the CPA and thus the cessation of my search for a new left formation.

Thus the second series of Ecoso was established as a "one woman band". This is still reflected in its contents, in that the articles do reflect the issues in which I am involved.

However, the formation of the Crow Collection Association means that the broad themes for Ecoso are chosen by a group and that attempts are made to include other contributors.

In the first issue of ^{Irregular/Ecoso} ~~Ecoso~~ most of the articles were based on original research by TRG members (TRG/Irregular was in touch with a community movement which was seething with ideas). However the second series makes use of research done by others, popularising current issues and current research and republishes material from local, national and overseas journals. (with copyright permission)

(3)

The second series of Ecoso also differs from the earlier publication in that some of the Ecoso articles are deliberately written so that they can be republished in other community publications. Some examples of organisations/publications which have republished Ecoso articles are :- Housing for Aged Action Group, Union of Australian Women, Arena, Overland, Nexus, People's Committee for Melbourne, Rainbow Alliance, Centre for Public Education, City Alternative News, North Melbourne News.

ECOSO AND THE RADICAL ECOLOGY CONFERENCE.

See document "Maurie Crow and the "Melbourne Town Planning Research Group), page 3.

Footnote In 1967 the title "Irregular" was chosen for two reasons, with hindsight these are whimsical reasons, if you like. The first was that the group was an Irregular group in that it was a gathering of ALP and Communist Party members, and this was "irregular" for ALP at that time. Secondly, at first, no-one knew if it would be possible to sustain a regular newsletter and a regular gathering, this was not a correct prediction as the newsletter came out quite regularly every month for the first six or so years, and the meetings were also very regular.

Paul Bevan 20/4/98

History of Ecoso 1967 to 1979

Republished from Ecoso 21 (Irregular 71)
Statement When First Series of Ecoso Ceased 1979

ITEM 3 : WE SEEK AN AMALGAMATED PUBLICATION

"Ecoso Exchange" is seeking to amalgamate its publication efforts with several other existing (or projected) publications which do (or would) overlap the general area in which "Ecoso Exchange" is interested.

Such a move could improve the quality of the presentation, give greater diversity of content and attitudes, and widen the readership of all groups participating.

Readers of "Ecoso Exchange" will know that this publication is based on the four "Ecoso Guidelines" (copy of the Guidelines enclosed to remind readers). During the past few years, a number of other groups with kindred or complementary interests have come into existence and it is with such new types of organisations that "Ecoso Exchange" will be discussing some form of working together on a publication.

Potted History of Ecoso

In June 1967 a publication "Irregular" was produced to exchange information on urban planning matters amongst a small group of radicals who were a mixed bunch of professionals, municipal councillors, social planners and local political activists.

The monthly meetings of the Town Planning Research Group (T.R.G.), as the group producing the publication called themselves, grew in numbers. "Irregular" from the outset dealt with current Melbourne planning issues as well as progressive planning ideas from anywhere. Its readership gradually increased to several hundred and although most subscribers lived in Melbourne a number of subscriptions came from other capital cities.

In November 1972, a meeting of TRG adopted the four Ecoso Guidelines and changed the name of the publication from "Irregular" to "Ecoso Exchange"; (Eco for ecological and 'So' for sociological, and 'Exchange' because the publication now aimed to be non-authoritarian and non-manipulative). The change in name marked the group's resolve that in future much more attention would be directed to the twin problems of the ecological crisis and the social crisis.

The change in name coincided with growing movements with similar objectives and strong links began to be made with a number of similar organisations. Consideration was given to pooling resources with some of the other groups, but at this stage it was decided that "Ecoso Exchange" should keep its own identity but should encourage other publications to republish material printed in it.

Thus the main effect of "Ecoso Exchange" (like "Irregular" before it) was a spin-off effect. It alerted its readers to major current controversies and raised understanding and thus helped to indicate the scope of possible activity, by helping with analysis and suggesting better alternatives. Its members and readers, in their own fields and in their own style entered the joustings in many contests on such issues as urban renewal, the transportation plan, Melbourne's Regional Plan, the Reports from Habitat, The Melbourne City Council's Strategy Plan and a whole range of social needs.

Just before "Irregular" changed its name to "Ecoso Exchange", the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Vic. Chapter) selected this innovative publication as an example of "an outstanding contribution to the literature of Town Planning" and awarded "Irregular" one of the Robin Boyd Environmental Awards. This unexpected recognition helped to give the "Ecoso Exchange" group confidence to seek support from other radical groups for some type of gathering on ecological problems.

On the initiative of some of the "Ecoso Exchange" readers in several capital cities, sponsors for the Radical Ecology Conference (R.E.C.) were sought. "Ecoso Exchange" also helped to establish R.E.C. Committees in a number of capital cities and eventually the R.E.C. was held in Melbourne in March 1975 with about five hundred participants.

In the latter half of the 1970s a significant development has taken place in the ecological/sociological sphere. This period has been marked by the emergence of groups such as the Conservation of Urban Energy Group (C.U.E.), of the Conservation Council of Victoria, which published the book "Seeds for Change", the emergence of an energy group within the Friends of the Earth (F.O.E.) and the coalition of a number of groups that is now known as Environmentalists for Full Employment (E.F.F.E.). This group is sponsored by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Friends of the Earth and a number of unions. There has also been the establishment of the Environment Action Centre which has mainly come into existence through the enthusiasm of some young environmentalists.

During this period, some of the main contributors to "Ecoso Exchange" have been preparing papers for various seminars, or helping with publications ranging from books (such as "Seeds for Change") to news bulletins.

On most occasions these efforts have been in association with members of other groups. Some of the material has been published in "Ecoso Exchange" and some "Ecoso Exchange" material has been used as seminar papers. But, on the whole, valuable information, new research, significant writings and even events of common interest often circulate unevenly, or, worse still, lack publication altogether.

It is probably now time to consider how to establish more effective links with some of the groups that appear to be on the same 'wave length' as "Ecoso Exchange". It may be quite possible to amalgamate with a number of groups to produce a publication, and at the same time allow each group to maintain its own autonomy and membership.

If any reader has ideas on this proposition please write to "Ecoso Exchange", Box 87, Carlton South 3053.

Whatever the outcome of discussions about the future of "Ecoso Exchange" one thing is certain in the flux. There is a definite need for some type of publication such as "Ecoso Exchange". The responses from readers have shown that "Ecoso Exchange" has had a part to play; what now has to be considered, is how to update that part to meet the problems of the 1980s.

Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

by Ruth Crow 1993.

This newsletter was started in 1967 by a group of people with which Ruth and Maurie Crow were associated. It continued being published about six times a year until the early 1980s. Publication ceased for a few years but the newsletters was revived by Ruth in 1988.

The Ecoso Constituency.

Who Subscribes to Ecoso. This chart roughly classifies the 300 current subscribers to the Ecoso Exchange Newsletter.

Period = approximate date on which a subscription was first paid.

Main Issues = type of issue in newsletters of the period

Number = current subscribers from that period.

Comment = areas of subscribers' interests

<u>Period</u>	<u>Main Issues</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Comment</u>
1967...	Urban Renewal, Freeways, Sprawl	25	Some now MPs and Crs
1975...	World Resources, Comm. Action	30	Conservationists
1980...	Municip Plan, Human services	75	Crs, Community grps. etc
1988...	Economics, employment, equity	80	Revived Int. in urban and ecology issues Plus tribute to Maurie
1990..	Retrieval of Ecoso material, How to use Crow Collection	90	Educationalists,

.....

Where do subscribers live and/or work ? 80 subscribers (25%) live and/or work in the Western Region, 15 in rural Victoria, 17 interstate, 3 overseas (N.Z., U.S.A., France) and the rest in Metropolitan Melbourne.

At which universities are there subscribers ? The Victoria University of Technology, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Deakin, Phillip, Latrobe, Monash, and Swinburne Universities; and interstate, Freemantle, Adelaide, Wollongong, Macquarie, Sydney, New South Wales and Griffiths; and one from overseas, Los Angeles (U.S.A.).

How are the costs of the publication raised ? The cost of Ecoso printing and postage is covered by \$10.00 subscription for 7 issues. Generous donations from some Ecoso subscribers are contributing to financing the administration of the Crow Collection Association..

How is the publication used ? The high proportion of subscription renewals indicates that the newsletter provides information that is useful to educationalists and to people involved in community organisations. The two quotes from the late Prof. Henry Mayer endorses this estimate. The quotes are on the next page.